



# alaska report

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## Save Teshekpuk Lake in Western Arctic:

### *Special Area at Risk*

This fall, the Bush Administration could auction off the first oil and gas leases to oil companies in the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area of the Alaska's Western Arctic.

Ignoring vocal opposition from Alaska Natives, scientists, sportsmen, and environmentalists, the Bush administration recently opened for leasing 100 percent of the internationally significant Teshekpuk Lake Special Area in the Northeast Planning Area of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPRA). The decision eliminates long-established wildlife and environmental protections first put in place by Reagan Administration Interior Secretary James Watt.

Valued by local Alaska Natives for subsistence, as well as by national sportsmen, conservationists, and naturalists, the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area is a critical part of America's Arctic.

Besides being one of the most important and sensitive arctic wetland complexes in the Northern Hemisphere, the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area is home to the 45,000-head Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd, 60,000 molting geese a year, and the entire breeding population of Steller's eiders. Hundreds of species of birds migrate from six different continents in order to spend part of the year in Teshekpuk Lake. (See **alaska report**, Mar. 2006, July 2004.)

*"While the battle over drilling the [arctic] refuge raged in Congress, the Bush Administration leased vast tracts of land to the west and offshore waters to the highest bidder."*

Joel K. Bourne, Jr., writing for the May 2006 issue of National Geographic magazine in the cover story, "Selling Alaska's Frontier."

In 1977, Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus established

the fragile wetlands surrounding Teshekpuk Lake as the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area. This designation meant that the wildlife, subsistence and cultural values must receive maximum protection under any future development scenario for the NPRA in general. Until recently, this designation was enough to protect this pristine place.

The Bush administration has made clear its intention to turn the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area into a giant network of drilling platforms, gravel roads, airstrips and pipelines. Further, thanks to the 2005 Energy Policy Act, oil companies can be assured they will be heftily subsidized by taxpayer dollars to drill in places like the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area.



### Citizen voices speak out for T-Lake

In response to a request for comments on whether to weaken T-Lake area protections, more than 215,000 citizens spoke out in opposition to opening more of the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area to oil leasing. The mayor of the North Slope Borough – the largest municipal government entity on Alaska's North Slope – spoke openly about the threat to Alaska Native communities' subsistence resources and cultural values – which are protected under the 1976 Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act. National sportsmen's groups, ornithologists and even members of Congress have voiced opposition to opening this part of the Teshekpuk Lake area.

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## Chugach National Forest to open Kenai Peninsula Critical Areas to Snow machines?

The U.S. Forest Service is developing a winter use plan for the Kenai Peninsula that could surrender 85 percent of it to snowmobile use. More than a year ago, the Chugach National Forest began an analysis of winter motorized and non-motorized recreation access to the entire Seward Ranger District, or all Forest Service lands on the Kenai Peninsula. (See **alaska report** Oct. 2005.)

The Kenai Peninsula is a fabled part of the 5.5 million acre Chugach National Forest in southcentral Alaska. This huge national forest is rich in natural beauty, temperate rainforest, and fish and wildlife, with some of the richest salmon spawning streams in America. It boasts tidewater glaciers, towering peaks, alpine tundra, coastal estuaries, bays, inlets and coves, vast areas without roads. The Kenai and Russian Rivers support the biggest recreational fishery in Alaska.

### Save T-Lake

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Yet the Department of Interior dismissed these diverse voices and gave the nod to oil and gas leasing in 100 percent of the area. Apparently the Department is listening only to one of the few voices in support of opening this area, namely, ConocoPhillips, Inc. ConocoPhillips' role as a major industrial player on the North Slope does not give them the right to go into sensitive habitats and fragment the ecosystem for short-term oil profits. It should be the responsibility of our government to keep assaults on the environment like this from happening.

Our country deserves this unique unspoiled area, no matter how much Big Oil is willing to pay for developing it. It's time now for Americans to stand up to Big Oil and to urge the Bush Administration to cancel its plans to offer the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area for oil leasing.

### What's At Stake: Balanced Management

After offering three alternatives to the public for comment, the agency has selected its preferred alternative which would expand the area open to snow machine use from 70 to 85 percent of the planning area. Only 15 percent of the area would be permanently closed to snow machines. The proposed plan is disappointing, short-sighted and unbalanced.

A much better choice would be Alternative 1, which comes closest to balancing motorized recreation with wildlife protection and natural values. With a few improvements, Alternative 1 could significantly reduce winter impacts to wildlife and wilderness character and provide balanced recreational opportunities. It is precisely in winter that wildlife species need to conserve energy in order to survive and thus most need sanctuary from disruptive motorized intrusions.

Already, helicopter skiing, intensive snowmobiling and other motorized uses are threatening wildlife and wilderness resources. These uses damage habitats, disrupt wildlife and utterly destroy wilderness character.

Expanding snow machine use is not the answer. Only by designating large areas of the Kenai as off-limits to motorized use can the Forest Service preserve wildlife, natural quiet and wilderness quality recreational opportunities. It will also be critical for the agency to permanently close to both helicopter skiing and snow machine use the spectacular and still-pristine Snow River unit and the southern half of the Ptarmigan/Grant unit.

The Snow River is eligible for designation as a Wild River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as the Forest Service recognized when it recommended this protective designation to the Congress. The wilderness character of this important area should be protected for the future.

A final decision is expected by fall of 2006. ♦

-- Katherine Fuselier

➔ **WHAT YOU CAN DO:** The first lease sale in the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area is scheduled to occur on September 27, 2006. Please take time *today* to send letters to ConocoPhillips as well as the Department of the Interior, asking that the lease sale be stopped. *The clock is ticking.*

Visit [www.SaveTLake.org](http://www.SaveTLake.org) today to send a letter directly and to find out more about this special place.

If you prefer to send a personal, hand-written letter, please mail your letter(s) to the Sierra Club Anchorage field office and we will hand-deliver them to the Department of the Interior and ConocoPhillips:

Write to Sierra Club Anchorage, 333 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 307, c/o Save T-Lake Campaign, Anchorage, AK 99501-2341. ♦

-- Betsy Goll



# House passes stand-alone bill to authorize Arctic Refuge drilling

## But Measure faces certain filibuster in Senate

On May 26 the House of Representatives passed HR 5429, a bill by House Resources Committee chairman Richard Pombo (R-CA) to authorize opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain (1002 area) to oil drilling. The vote was 225-201. To see how your member of Congress voted, go to <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2006/roll209.xml>

Arctic activists will not be surprised to hear that Rep. Pombo and the Congressional Leadership decided to trot out another drilling bill on the Friday before the Memorial Day Weekend, the start of the so called "summer driving season." Having failed to pass any meaningful energy legislation in response to the growing consumer angst this spring over higher gasoline prices, Rep. Pombo decided to throw out a bit of red meat to his political base, so that he could go home over the holiday recess and claim Congress was being responsive. But passing a bill to authorize Arctic drilling won't lower the price at the pump! The Arctic Refuge hold a speculative amount of oil at best, and even the oil industry admits it would take at least 10 years to begin bringing that oil to market. Because the U.S., which uses about 25 percent of the world's energy production, sits on less than three percent of the world's known oil reserves, we simply cannot drill our way to lower prices, nor to energy "independence".

It was expected the House would pass this bill. The votes are fairly entrenched. But let's hope there is a growing sense of fatigue among the American public and among members of Congress who may finally decide Rep. Pombo is wasting the Congress' precious little remaining legislative time.

It is unfortunate that the present Republican leadership has only one response to higher gas prices--more drilling--whether it is off our sensitive coasts or in a remote wildlife refuge. America must pursue cheaper, cleaner, faster and safer

energy solutions that will start saving consumers and businesses money today and protect our most precious landscapes and coastal waters. Instead of more drilling, Congress should make critical strides on the public transportation and clean energy fronts, embracing clean renewable sources of energy and improved efficiency standards like making cars go farther on a gallon of gas. Vastly improved public transportation infrastructures are needed to give travelers convenient, real alternatives to driving.

⇒ **WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Congress watchers consider this latest drilling bill *Dead on Arrival* on the Senate side as it faces certain filibuster. **But make sure:** let your Senators know what you think of a bill to authorize drilling on the sensitive, wildlife-rich Arctic coastal plain. Call your Senators through the Capitol switchboard at (202)224-3121, or write them at their local office nearest you.

For more information, contact: Myke Bybee (202)675-2389 or Betsy Goll (907)276-4044.

## Arctic Wilderness Week coming in September

Sierra Club and our partners in the Alaska Coalition are looking for volunteers ready to walk the halls of Congress to speak up for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The wilderness week is scheduled for Sept. 9 through 13, with participants arriving for an orientation get-together Saturday evening, spending Sunday being briefed in a training seminar on the issues of Arctic and Alaska rainforest protection and on "how to lobby effectively", and then visiting Congressional offices to talk with staff and occasionally members of Congress from Monday to Wednesday.

A Congressional reception and a special Arctic rally will be highlights of the event. If you're interested in joining, please contact Mike Bybee at (202)675-2389. To register online, go to [http://www.alaskawild.org/takeaction\\_wildernessweek.html](http://www.alaskawild.org/takeaction_wildernessweek.html). ♦



Camping in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

### Subscribe to the Alaska Task Force e-mail alert list!

alaska report comes out only four times a year. Keep up to date with fast-breaking news and action needed in between issues of the newsletter on our e-mail list. Send email to [vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org](mailto:vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org) to be put in the email list; indicate what state you live in.

# Alaska Teens take action on Global Warming

Because Alaska, situated so far north, is experiencing more obvious and alarming effects of global warming than the rest of the nation, Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) embarked on a statewide global warming outreach and education project in August 2005. During our *Summer Get Together* training, teen members of this student group gathered in Homer to learn about global warming impacts in Alaska, the science behind the greenhouse effect, and how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Afterwards, AYEA graduate Verner Wilson of Dillingham wrote a "Letter to our Leaders," describing the devastating impacts of global warming on Alaska and demanding national action through legislation reducing greenhouse gas emissions and investment in renewable energy.

"I started this petition to ask our leaders to help protect this place that Alaska youth have inherited, and to protect our lifestyles and cultures," said Wilson. "Communities like Shishmaref are sinking underwater, and invasive species are affecting the environment that Alaskans have depended upon for thousands of years. I want our leaders to know that if they do not take action today, there will be huge consequences tomorrow."

In November 2005, Verner's peers turned his letter into a statewide youth petition, and developed an educational powerpoint presentation on global warming. AYEA chapter leaders gave the presentation to more than 300 science and social studies classrooms in schools throughout Anchorage, the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Fairbanks, Juneau, Prince of Wales Island, Yakutat, Ketchikan, Sitka, Homer, Soldotna, and Kenai. Some of the teens traveled to engage youth from some ninety more communities.

AYEA garnered 5,000 teen signatures from 105 communities in Alaska by April 2006. This equals more than 10 percent of the enrolled high school population, and just under 10 percent of the entire Alaska teen population. From April 25-28, a delegation of teens from Dillingham, St. Michael Village, Anchorage, and Yakutat traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with the Alaska Delegation and other Congressional leaders on global warming. They presented their petition to Senator Lisa Murkowski, who requested that a group of AYEA members

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*Global warming has been called the "tipping point" in re-connecting mainstream society with our environment.*

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meet with climate change specialists in Fairbanks to bridge the "science and public awareness" divide on the issue.

During the AYEA 2006 *Civics and Conservation Summit* in March, fifteen teen leaders promoted legislation to create an Alaska Climate Change Impact Commission--which the State legislature adopted. They successfully lobbied for a youth seat on the commission and met with legislators to promote other bills to fund alternative energy projects.



photo: Susanne Fleek, Alaska Conservation Foundation

Anchorage Mayor Begich, who will become the first Alaska mayor to sign the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, applauds the signature gathering efforts of Anchorage AYEA members on April 13, 2006.

On April 21, AYEA teens introduced a Climate Change Resolution at the spring conference of the Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG). Four hundred teens from 20 communities unanimously adopted the resolution, demanding action at the Alaska state legislative level. AYEA members hope to push this resolution forward during the 2007 Civics and Conservation Summit. At the end of April, a team of AYEA members held a press event with Mayor Mark Begich to announce the mayor's Anchorage initiatives to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Through this global warming project, AYEA was able to engage 500 percent more young people in one year with environmental issues, and five times as many youth as we have ever engaged in the history of our program.

"Because so many youth from so many villages have signed this petition, I really feel like I am helping others. By speaking to other youth about global warming, I have given other people the courage to speak up," stated Charlee Lockwood from St. Michael Village.

AYEA moves into "phase II" of our campaign on global warming this August. Our summer training will focus on reducing emissions and promoting renewable energy, engaging diverse teens with an issue that has already been called the "tipping point" in re-connecting mainstream society with our environment.

AYEA is a high school program of the National Wildlife Federation. ♦

-- Polly Carr Program Manager  
(907)339-3907 or [ayea@nwf.org](mailto:ayea@nwf.org)

## Big Year for Birding for the Arctic Refuge

As I write this, migratory birds are flying north over our Yukon Territory home. Arctic terns, tundra swans and Pacific loons are just a few of the bird species we see flying north across Canada towards the Arctic Refuge .

After my son Malkolm finishes grade 9 in June 2007, he won't be heading off on a "normal" summer holiday. We'll cycle south on a "Big Year," a twelve-month quest to count birds.

"Big Year" birders are obsessed — typically they jet and drive in a frenzy to list as many bird species as possible. We're obsessed too — about protecting birds and their habitat. We'll travel without using fossil fuels (by bike, boots and boats). Our 10,000-mile route will wind down the Alaska Highway towards California, then east to Florida, and back again to Arizona.

Malkolm is not new to birding (see below). He and I hope to encourage others to join our marathon quest. Here's how:

- come out to meet us on our travels between June 2007 and June 2008 and publicize this outing in your community;
- organize your own birding activity in honor of the Arctic Refuge, and publicize it;

- sponsor us to help raise money for the Arctic Refuge .

⇒ **Join us!** Become involved for the Arctic Refuge! Our project is a "work in progress." Our route and destinations along the way are not yet firm; they will depend on your help and guiding us to where birds that nest in the Arctic go in winter, and your telling us where we can meet friends of the Refuge.

With your help, we hope our Big Year will contribute to a healthy future for Arctic Refuge.migratory birds. **Let's hear from you.**

-- Ken Madsen, 21 Klondike Road

Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, Y1A 3L8 kenm@polarcom.com

### Malkolm the Birder Boy

When I was twelve years old my parents and I flew to the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge. It was my seventh Arctic trip. We had also traveled across the United States many times doing slideshows to prevent oil drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

On this trip, I was determined to find a Bluethroat, a tiny thrush that migrates all the way from Asia. My sister Kirsten had seen one but I hadn't. She'd teased me, "Only good birders see Bluethroats!"

We backpacked for four days, watching Golden Eagles over the mountains and Golden Plovers strutting in the tundra. Then we hiked to a willow creek — perfect Bluethroat habitat. We scanned the bushes. Nothing. Nothing but caribou! They spilled over the foothills and soon were everywhere. We hiked among 50,000 as we returned to camp.



The next day we returned to the creek, but this time a golden grizzly descended a hill and vanished in the willows. We scampered back to camp.

The third day we tried again, alert for bears. Wendy saw it first. It was amazing to see the bird that I had only known from field guides. I managed to snap two good photos before it disappeared.

We hiked back to the ocean and kayaked through the icebergs to Kaktovik. A month later we were back in Whitehorse. Then I told Kirsten, "Only good birders hike a hundred miles to find Bluethroats!"

## State Game Board allows sport hunters to bait animals on Alaska's federal lands

Sport hunters can now hunt wolverines, coyotes, foxes, and wolves over bait, according to the Alaska Board of Game in its 2006-7 hunting regulations. Baiting of wolves is part of the State's aggressive predator control program aimed at wolves, but now increasingly toward black and brown bears as well.

Intended for state, private, and federal lands where sport hunting is allowed, the new baiting regulation would be an approved hunting technique for national preserves managed by the National Park Service (NPS), national wildlife refuges, national forests, including wilderness areas, and BLM lands including ANILCA-created conservation units, recreation areas, and wild & scenic rivers.

NPS regulations now prohibit the feeding of animals in all units of the park system in Alaska. So far, however, the Game Board and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game have rebuffed the NPS's request that national preserves also be exempted from the scope of the new baiting regulation.

Meanwhile, the NPS has acquiesced since 1981 in black bear baiting in the preserves by sport hunters, and in both preserves and parks by subsistence hunters (the latter under a separate federal subsistence management program). By challenging the NPS with its new four-species baiting regulation, the State has provided the NPS with the opportunity to ban black bear baiting as also contrary to national park system policy and regulations.

Sport and subsistence black bear baiting has also been present since 1981 in national wildlife refuges under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) regulations that say the Service will generally defer to state game regulations. Both the Forest Service and the BLM also generally defer to the State on hunting and fishing regulations.



### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Urge the regional directors of the federal agencies to ban baiting of the five species on the public lands under their jurisdiction:

Marcia Blaszk, Regional Director  
National Park Service  
240 West 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Tom Melius, Regional Director  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Denny Bschor, Regional Forester  
USDA Forest Service Regional Office  
P.O. Box 21628, Juneau, Alaska 99802

Henri Bisson, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office,  
222 W. 7th Ave, Rm. 13, Anchorage, Alaska 99513 ♦

-- Jack Hession

# State of Alaska Holds Exxon Accountable

## Oil Giant Told to Pay Up

Waiting until the final June 1st deadline, the U.S. Justice Department and the State of Alaska finally acted in the best interest of the people and directed Exxon Mobil Corporation to pay an additional \$92 million to help repair damage caused by lingering quantities of oil that continue to sully the waters and harm wildlife in Alaska's Prince William Sound where the Exxon Valdez tanker crashed 17 years ago.

On March 24, 1989, the Exxon Valdez tanker spilled at least 11 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound. This spill killed more wildlife than any other in the world, and oiled 1,500 miles of coastline from the Sound to Cook Inlet to Kodiak. In 1991, the Alaska and U.S. governments settled with Exxon the civil lawsuit for damages to natural resources and public lands from the oil spill. This settlement included an important clause known as the "Reopener for Unknown Injury", stating that by June 1, 2006, the governments could demand up to \$100 million for restoration projects to address injuries to species, populations, or habitats that were not anticipated at the time of the 1991 settlement. (See **alaska report**, March 2006.)

Seventeen years later, oil from the Exxon Valdez still lingers beneath the shoreline and on beaches, with 100-200 tons of oil remaining that covers at least six discontinuous miles of the intertidal zone. This oil continues to injure wildlife and habitat, helping prevent the recovery of 23 of the 30 resources and services injured by the spill.

"Natural resources of Prince William Sound, located within the Chugach National Forest, sustained heavy impacts from the Exxon Valdez spill. An ongoing commitment to restore these injured lands and resources will greatly benefit the ecosystem and marine life they support," said Mark Rey, Undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture. "Both Alaska residents and nonresidents use this area extensively for subsistence, recreation, sport hunting and fishing activities. Removal of lingering subsurface oil, which remains bioavailable and toxic seventeen years after the spill, is a necessary step in the effort to restore this environment."

This spring, as the June 2006 deadline for claims



Loon, © Dale DeArmond

under the "reopener" clause approached, concerned citizens from across the spill zone and throughout Alaska came together to hold Exxon accountable for one of the worst environmental disasters of our time. Through resolutions of the Alaska Legislature and local and tribal governments, and efforts by various organizations, Alaskans voiced overwhelming support for reopening the 1991 settlement. Since early March, Sierra Club's Building Environmental Communities (BEC) program helped to encourage Sierra Club activists from around the state and nation to pressure the State of Alaska and the Department of Justice. Volunteers held nearly 50 house parties featuring the film "*Sierra Club Chronicles: The Day the Water Died*." This film was also sent to more than 20 libraries in Alaska and was shown to an audience of 200 in Anchorage as part of Exxon oil spill anniversary events.

The state's decision to seek redress under the reopener clause was very important for the economy and ecosystem of the region. We thank all those who helped make this happen.

## Continue to Expose Exxon!

As one of the world's most profitable companies, Exxon has the power to move the world toward a more sustainable energy future. Instead, Exxon has acted consistently to move our country backward on energy policy by opposing efforts to stop global warming, lobbying to drill in America's most pristine areas, and failing to promote renewable energy and fuel efficiency. And Exxon still refuses to pay the money it owes to fishermen hurt by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Seventeen years later Exxon has yet to pay a dime of the \$5 billion punitive award to fishers, landowners and Natives for the losses of livelihood, environment and health from the Exxon Valdez oil spill. Exxon reported a staggering after-tax profit of \$32 billion for 2005. That's over \$58 million per day of after-tax profit. With the net profits generated in two months' time, Exxon could pay all 32,000 claimants in the spill zone what they are owed, twelve long years after the judgment on their behalf.

### ⇒ WHAT YOU CAN DO:

\*\* Sign our petition on line at: <http://www.sierraclub.org/petition/exxposeexxon/> telling Exxon to stop stalling and use their record profits to pay the people of Prince William Sound the money they owe them!

\*\* Invite friends, family and neighbors over and watch the 30-minute Sierra Club documentary about the Exxon Valdez oil spill disaster, "*The Day the Water Died*." This documentary shows that the spill was not only an ecological nightmare, but a human disaster as well.

Call or email Katherine for a free copy of the DVD and house party kit: (907)276-4060, [katherine@sierraclubalaska.org](mailto:katherine@sierraclubalaska.org). ♦

-- Katherine Fuselier

## UPDATES:

### House Votes to Limit Subsidies for Tongass Roads-to-Nowhere

In a strong bipartisan effort, the U.S. House of Representatives voted in mid May to limit subsidies used to build new roads to nowhere in the Tongass National Forest. This is a major step toward saving both our country's last great rainforest and taxpayer money.

The amendment to the Fiscal Year 2007 Interior Appropriations bill, sponsored by Representatives Steve Chabot (R-OH) and Robert Andrews (D-NJ), won by a vote of 237 - 181. An identical amendment offered by Chabot and Andrews in 2004 passed the House with strong bipartisan support (222-205), but was later removed during conference. The 2005 amendment did not pass the House. (See **alaska report**, July 2004.) Now, as the Senate and conference committee take up the 2007 Interior spending bill, Congress has the power stop the irresponsible spending and harm to Alaska's wild forests.

The Tongass National Forest is home to one of the government's most ridiculous subsidies, with tens of millions spent each year on roads that go nowhere. Subsidized roads used to log the Tongass have cost American taxpayers \$1 billion since 1982. In 2005 alone, the Forest Service spent \$48.5 million on the Tongass logging program and received only \$500,000 in revenue. One recent Tongass road project cost taxpayers \$2.9 million, while the private company using the road to log only paid the treasury \$107,000 for the trees it cut. Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay to destroy the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world.

Efforts to stop Tongass roads subsidies are supported by a broad coalition of taxpayer and budget watchdog groups, sportsmen and conservationists. Even Alaska's leading daily newspaper, the Anchorage Daily News, editorialized in favor of ending Tongass subsidies. With the government running huge deficits, Congress will continue to hear that it's good business to stop the colossal waste of tax dollars in the Tongass Forest.

#### **Reminder: Tongass Forest Plan Now under Revision!**

The Forest Service is in the process of a court-ordered revision of the Tongass National Forest management plan. Your input is needed to ensure the revised forest plan accurately reflects the robust and diverse economy of southeast Alaska.

Let the Forest Service know you believe it's time for a change! Ask them to craft a forest plan for the Tongass which moves away from the unsustainable practices of logging inventoried roadless areas at a high cost to U.S. taxpayers, native flora and fauna, and local communities. The lifeblood of the local economy is the scenic beauty, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife and overall quality of life provided by these wild, roadless places of America's largest national forest.

⇒ **To comment:** Go to Forest Service Revision Website: <http://www.tongass-fpadjust.net/>. For more information, contact Katherine Fuselier at (907)276-4060.

### Pebble Mine Update

The proposed Pebble mine just southwest of Lake Clark National Park and also near Katmai National Park could become the world's largest open-pit gold mine; the plan for a massive development would substantially impact sensitive landscapes, world-class sport fisheries, and Native subsistence lifestyles. Please see **alaska report**, Nov. 2005, for a detailed description. Go to [www.sierraclub.org/wildlandsalaska\\_report/](http://www.sierraclub.org/wildlandsalaska_report/)

In February, 2006, the Alaska State Legislature held two hearings on the Pebble Mine proposal, specifically, on a resolution introduced by the House Speaker, the House Minority Leader, and several other Representatives, calling for more scrutiny of the proposed Pebble gold and copper project. After lengthy debate, with Juneau's leading lobbyists on both sides, the bipartisan resolution failed to pass.

In March, opponents of the Pebble Mine were joined by a powerful and perhaps unexpected ally: Alaska Senator Ted Stevens. The state's senior senator, a Republican, said he will continue to oppose the giant Pebble gold and copper project until convinced it will not harm the area's rich salmon runs. Stevens expressed irritation with Northern Dynasty's "overwhelming" lobbying efforts: "They're hiring people from all over the place to criticize me. I said, 'What about the fish?'" Stevens added that a huge open-pit mine poses too much threat to fish. He cited tailings, or waste rock, as well as mining roads. "That resource is an enormous resource not just for the Native people but for the Bristol Bay run and it ought not be tampered with by a gold mine." (from Anchorage Daily News, 3-11 and 4 13, 2006.)

### Denali Planning Update

The National Park Service, the Mat-Su Borough, and the State of Alaska spent several years planning cooperatively for new developments at the south border of Denali National Park. Central focus of the planning is a new South Denali Visitor Center. In late April 2006 they jointly released a final plan. After scoping had revealed more support for a Parks Highway Corridor-based alternative than for developing along the remote, backcountry Petersville Road, NPS put most development, including one large parking lot, along the Parks Highway. Despite extensive public involvement, locals still worry that areas near the proposed new Visitor Center (near the southern end of Curry Ridge) may not be sufficiently protected from "Glitter Gulch" type development. **Visit planning website at [www.southdenaliplanning.com](http://www.southdenaliplanning.com).**



## The story behind the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

With the Arctic Refuge at the center of today's intense political battles, it is fascinating to step back from current events and reflect on the "parent" campaign to protect this area initially. A new book is just out that does exactly this. **Last Great Wilderness** by Roger Kaye chronicles the campaign during the 1950s to establish the Arctic National Wildlife Range.

What a perfect time for this history to appear: 2006 is the golden anniversary of the now almost legendary 1956 trip to the remote Sheenjek River drainage by Olaus and Margaret Murie, a trip made famous by Mardie in her *Two in the Far North*.

Roger Kaye, who is on the staff of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and who has also achieved respected renown as a wilderness philosopher, makes it clear that the Muries' epic journey focused public attention on the broad ecosystem issues at stake but was by no means the start of the campaign to preserve intact a whole Arctic ecosystem. That is traced back to Robert Marshall's writings in the 1930s, and specifically to discussions in the 1949 Alaska Science conference. Since the National Petroleum Reserve had been established earlier in the western Arctic, Alaska's eastern Arctic ecosystem was pinpointed as having no known oil conflicts.

National Park Service planners George Collins and Lowell Sumner formulated the basic idea and influenced the Muries, whose 1956 trip first put into practical, human experience the abstract concepts about the value of wilderness to human lives in a highly "civilized" society. The Muries' writings showed how wilderness affected real people.

The campaign began with a clear preservation goal

but with no set ideas of what designation to seek nor what agency should have management. Political expediency influenced the ultimate choices.

The campaign for what became the Arctic National Wildlife Range, now Refuge, was intricately linked with two other concurrent campaigns, the campaign for Alaska statehood and that for the Wilderness Act. One reason Alaskans sought statehood was the hope that as a state, Alaska could control predators for enhancing game animal populations with less federal interference. The campaign to preserve the "Range" meant to counteract that. And while proponents of the Range clearly envisioned a wilderness-type area, politics led them toward a less strict "Refuge" or "Range."

Roger Kaye permeates this absorbing history with his visionary wilderness philosophy. At times the story may even play second fiddle to his emphasis on the values and character of wilderness. But no matter, the direct, deft prose moves forward admirably, one idea leading logically and inevitably to the next, connections and interrelationships set forth succinctly. The historic photographs are of interest also. This book is a "must read" for wilderness activists with a historical or philosophical bent, who like to grasp the big picture.

**Last Great Wilderness**, by Roger Kaye. University of Alaska Press, June 2006. 304 pp, color and b&w illus., maps, bibliography, index; hardcover \$29.95. To order, call toll-free (888)252-6657, or (907)474-6389. Or fax to (907)474-5502. Order via email at [fypress@uaf.edu](mailto:fypress@uaf.edu). (Not for ordering, but for more information, check the website [www.uaf.edu/uapress](http://www.uaf.edu/uapress)).

-- Vicky Hoover

### alaska report

alaska report is the newsletter of the Sierra Club Alaska Task Force, encouraging advocacy on Alaska federal lands issues, particularly as they pertain to the passage and implementation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980.

**Sierra Club**

85 Second Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3456  
(415) 977-5500

Edgar Wayburn, M.D., Chairman, Alaska Task Force  
Vicky Hoover, Editor

**Sierra Club Alaska Field Office**

333 West 4th Ave., Suite 307  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2341  
(907) 276-4048

Betsy Goll, Alaska Regional Representative  
Katherine Fuselier, Conservation Organizer  
Maryellen Oman, Program Assistant

**Southeast Alaska**

(907) 209-2999  
Irene Alexakos, Membership Outreach

**Sierra Club Washington Office**

408 C Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 547-1141

Melinda Pierce, Senior Washington representative

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